

# The Role of the Extension Service in **HELPING CHILDREN and YOUTH** Develop Healthy Personalities

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This is the composite report of the work groups at the Extension Conference on Children and Youth, December 8 to 13, 1950, which brought together 65 extension workers from 41 States, Puerto Rico, and Alaska, most of whom had participated in the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth. The purpose of the Conference was to determine the role of the Extension Service in carrying out the recommendations of the White House Conference and activating "The Pledge to Children." The theme of the White House Conference was "For Every Child a Healthy Personality."

all followed the same pattern of problem solving that has made this composite report possible.

This report has been developed in two parts. One picks up the problems of Extension organization to enable us better to provide for the needs of children and youth, and, therefore, is addressed to the extension worker. The other directly considers the needs of children and youth, and how they can be met. It is intended for county extension workers and program-planning groups.\*\*

"... we mean by personality the thinking, feeling, acting human being, who, for the most part, conceives of himself as an individual separate from other individuals and objects. . . . In his conception of himself and in his relations with others the individual comes to behave in a way that is peculiarly his own. . . . what we are really talking about is the concrete human being and the relative success of his endeavor to play his part in relation to other human beings and to the institutions through which social life is carried on."\*

The Extension Conference considered what the Extension Service is doing and what it needs to do, its weaknesses and their corrections, and mapped a plan for Federal, State, and county action. This was a democratic work conference with all levels and areas of Extension represented and in which all participated in the selection of the problems to be considered and in the discussions of the groups. Each work group selected its own area, but

## 4. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RELATIONS SHOULD BE A MORE IMPORTANT PART OF THE PROGRAM OF THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Extension is concerned.

The Extension Service works more closely with many rural homes than any other agency and is accepted by rural people as a source of information and guidance in the use of new knowledge for the improvement of rural living. The Extension Service needs to consider the effects of all its varied programs upon the development of people. Extension programs have always been based on recognized needs and the information available for meeting them. Recent research has shown that successful, pleasant experiences are important in the shaping of personality and that every experience leaves its mark on the individual. Therefore, the conference suggests:

WHAT The Extension Service can do.

1. Give more attention to the amount of training in this field when selecting staff members.

\* Fact-Finding Report: Children and Youth at the Midcentury, pages 3 and 4.

\*\* For complete reports see Mimeo. 1200-1205, Ext. Ser., U.S.D.A., December 1950.

2. Select more staff members who are especially trained in youth development and human relations.
3. Integrate programs in youth development and human relations into other Extension activities.

*HOW We can do it.*

1. Critical evaluation of the whole Extension program by--

*Having* an advisory committee of State and county staff, academic faculty, and college 4-H members to help in the integration.

*Having* the staff in conference list the important things, deciding on emphases and deletions.

*Determining* the human relations aspect of each field and how these can be strengthened through the cooperation of personnel (example, management and family life.)

*Working out and using* a set of principles that show the relationship of each activity toward the development of responsible citizens.

*Having* each extension worker center emphasis on goals and values for the individual and their relation to the whole group.

*Encouraging* the practice of weekly conferences of county extension workers to discuss problems and needs of the people and integration of the program.

2. Set up programs and activities that will further the human relations aspects of extension work by--

*Using* the specialist trained in human relations or the Extension delegate to the Extension Conference on Children and Youth.  
*Fusing* human relations into all bulletins.  
*Developing* a human relations program, such as dating, courtship, marriage, and family life, with young men and women and 4-H members.

*Making* family relations and child care projects part of the 4-H work as well as of the adult work.

*Planning* a reading program in this field for young people and adults.

*Encouraging* farm and home planning based on family goals.

*Using* the entire State staff, both men and women, to promote and present this program.

## **B. EXTENSION WORKERS NEED MORE PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING IN THIS FIELD**

*WHY We need training.*

Rural people are turning to extension workers for help in the solution of problems in family relations and child guidance. This is increasing with the pressures of mobilization. Young people are asking for help with the problems of courtship and marriage. 4-H boys and girls are having to give more help with the care of young children. The increasing tension of the times makes human relations more difficult and the need of help greater.

Many extension agents have not had opportunities for the training necessary in giving this service. More research findings are now available, and more people are prepared to give this training.

*WHAT We can do.*

Pre-service and in-service training for all extension workers should include work in child growth and development, emotions and personality, human relations with emphasis on family and community relations, and courtship and marriage.

*HOW We can do it.*

The Extension Service can ask to have such training available for students who plan to enter the Extension Service.

In-service training should be based on a study of the training that staff members have had and the training program planned to cover the gaps. This can be done by--

*Arranging* for workshops and summer school courses in the subject-matter area.

*Highlighting* human relations at annual conferences, using outstanding speakers and group discussion.

*Organizing* a State committee to guide activity in both pre-service and in-service training.

### C. EXTENSION WORK IN THIS FIELD COULD BE BETTER COORDINATED WITH THE WORK OF OTHER AGENCIES

#### WHY We need coordination.

Many organizations and agencies are concerned with this program. Failure in coordinating in the past may not have been due to the professional workers' lack of desire to cooperate but to the internal structure and objectives of each agency. Some agencies have no definite program, while others fail to publicize theirs. Some agency programs are formulated at the top level, and this makes coordination on the local level difficult. Agency goals may become more important than community and individual development. Frequently, agency results are a basis for the prestige of program and workers, and for appropriations and salaries.

#### WHAT We can do.

1. Work for more cooperation at national, State, and local levels either within the present framework or through results that will bring changes in policy and administration by--

*Strengthening* relationships to include cooperative planning, activity, and leader-training.

*Reevaluating* our own youth programs to be sure that they are open to cooperation.

#### HOW We can do it.

Every extension worker can strive for better coordination by--

*Preparing* a list of other agencies and organizations concerned.

*Becoming* familiar with their programs and telling extension groups about them.

*Finding* some means of bringing the professional workers together to promote friendliness and understanding.

*Setting up* eye-catching educational extension exhibits at inter-agency meetings.

*Being ready* to take the initiative and discuss coordination for more effective results, and to serve on committees.

*Encouraging* cooperative planning by all youth and youth-interested groups through county or community councils.

*Cooperating* with other agencies in conducting special programs concerning children, youth, and human relations.

*Meeting* with leaders in this field to discuss gaps and needs before setting up extension programs for child and youth development or in parent and family life education.

*Seeing* that each agency gets due recognition for its part in cooperative efforts.

Each extension worker can look at his own program and ask himself:

Which is more important, the child or my program? He can include in his plan of work specific plans for cooperation.

### D. THE EXTENSION SERVICE SHOULD DEVELOP MORE AND BETTER-USED CHANNELS OF INFORMATION ON HEALTHY PERSONALITIES BETWEEN EXTENSION WORKERS AND ALL THE PEOPLE

#### WHY We need better channels.

A program whose goal is to further the development of children and youth is inadequate if it does not reach all the people. Extension work has, so far, failed to reach all the people. Many extension workers either assume that everyone knows about their programs or they fail to realize their responsibility to work with all segments of the population. Public relations activities have not been adequate. The use of mass media needs better planning. The isolation of some farm people and some other groups has often been a difficult factor. State staffs are not receiving all that is available through the Federal office, and the information that does reach States is not always distributed among all the staff members. Specialists in the human relations field do not always assist other extension workers in applying basic human relations principles to extension activities. Extension workers usually come from the same middle class of society that plans the program and provides financial support.

#### WHAT We can do.

1. Key planning should be done at the State office for reaching all the people with information regarding child development and human relations.

2. Each extension worker should make a plan for reaching all segments of society in his work area.
3. County workers can create situations to make it easier for nonextension cooperators to become cooperators.

*HOW We can do it.*

1. Organize a State committee to develop a plan which will--

*Evaluate* the avenues now in use and be in accord with the study of the public relations program sponsored by the Land-Grant College Association.

*Use* the help of specialists and those who know.

*Develop* campaigns with the entire extension staff to disseminate more widely the available information in this field, and hold agent training meetings to keep the campaign moving.

*Prepare* striking news items and well-illustrated easy-to-read bulletins and other materials.

*Make* films, displays, and other visual aids available to county workers.

*Summarize* research information received from the Federal and State offices, and circulate it among all staff members.

*Encourage* the use of the family approach in extension publicity.

2. County workers can reach more people by--

*Planning* together in the county office.

*Mapping* the neglected areas in the county and considering the reason for the neglect. *Changing* approaches in line with these reasons.

3. County workers can make it easier for people to take part in programs through arranging meetings where they are, and organizing play groups for the little folk so young parents can participate.

*Have* some attractive feature in each meeting.

*Encourage* both youth and adults, and whole families, to demonstrate achievements before groups.

*Give* more recognition to individual family achievements.

4. A publications committee can help by--

*Checking* all publications for readability. *Preparing* kits of publications for county use.

*Sharing* materials in this field with other States.

*Working* in regional areas for the joint production of materials.

This report was developed by the Extension Service Youth Conference Report Committee: Dorothy Bigelow, Mary Rokahr, R. A. Turner, Herman Welch, and Laurel K. Sabrosky, chairman, assisted by Mrs. Lydia Lynde, E. W. Aiton, and Eunice Heywood.